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ABSTRACT

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), in its efforts to improve the economy and quality of life in the Appalachian Region, has identified high school dropouts as a major stumbling block to the area's economic growth. Findings of ARC-sponsored research on dropouts include the following: (1) high school dropouts are a serious problem in Appalachia, with some counties having dropout rates as high as 50 percent; (2) the problem cannot be effectively handled by schools alone: a variety of groups and resources must work together to attack it in each school district; and (3) public awareness of the problem and prevention efforts is low. With these and other findings, ARC developed a regional dropout prevention effort which, in its first 18 months, has allotted $2.5 million to 46 prevention projects. In addition to funds, ARC operates a regional awareness campaign whose objectives are: (1) to increase public awareness and understanding of the incidence of dropping out and its impact on the economic well-being of local communities; (2) to educate the public about the importance of keeping youth in school and in how the public can participate in reducing dropping out; and (3) to promulgate the efficacy of public/private partnerships in supporting dropout reduction efforts. This campaign includes the dissemination of information, resources, and encouragement. An appendix provides details about particular prevention programs. (KH)

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DROPOUT PREVENTION IN APPALACHIA:

LESSONS FOR THE NATION

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DROPOUT PREVENTION IN APPALACHIA:

LESSONS FOR THE NATION

A Report of the
Appalachian Regional Commission
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Prepared by:
Campbell Communications Inc.
Bethesda, Maryland

January, 1987

INTRODUCTION

High school dropouts are a national tragedy. The toll in human and community potential is severe, and the economic cost is staggering. All Americans daily feel the effects of this crisis: in the quality of their lives, in their ability to compete in a global marketplace, and in their tax burden. The facts speak for themselves:

- Dropouts are two-and-a-half times more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed.
- By age 25, even employed dropouts earn only two-thirds the income of those who stayed in school.
- Only one in six jobs is suitable for a high school dropout, and these odds will only grow worse as increasing technology requires a more educated workforce.
- Up to 80 percent of some prison populations are high school dropouts.
- Dropouts are more likely to need unemployment compensation, public health care, welfare, and public housing.

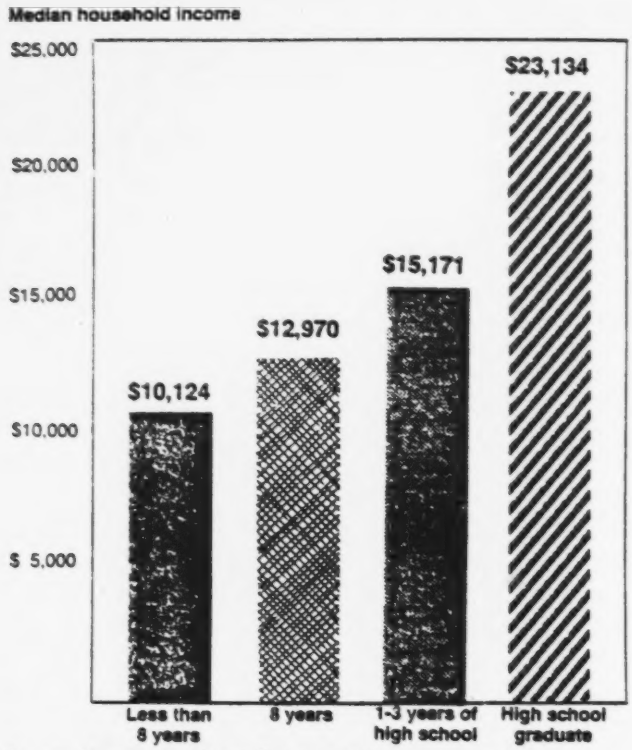
With a national dropout rate of 23.9 percent*, these are figures which cannot be ignored.

In the United States, one out of four students will leave high school without a diploma, one out of two in some inner cities and parts of Appalachia. Compare that to Japan, where the dropout rate is only 2.2 percent. While American factory workers sometimes have difficulty deciphering simple safety warnings, Japanese workers, with an average education equivalent to two years in college, can read complex instructions and operate highly sophisticated machinery. The economic implications are obvious.

Yet steps can be taken to change these frightening figures.

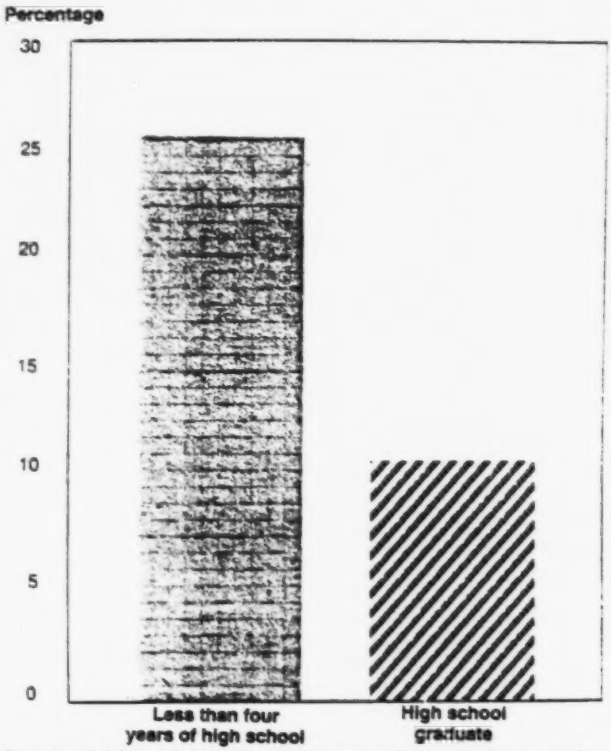
*U.S. Census, 1980

Household Median Income Related to Level of Education of Head of Household (1985)



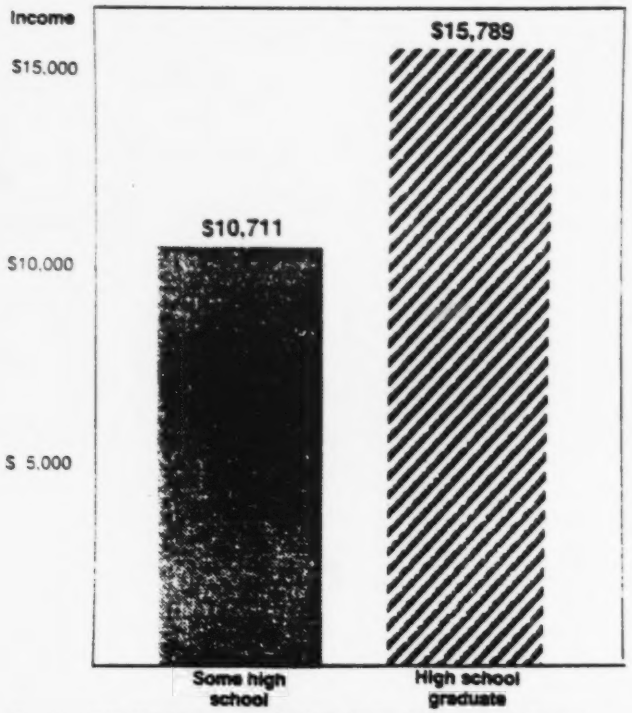
Source: *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Department of Labor.

Unemployment Rates by Level of Education (October 1984)



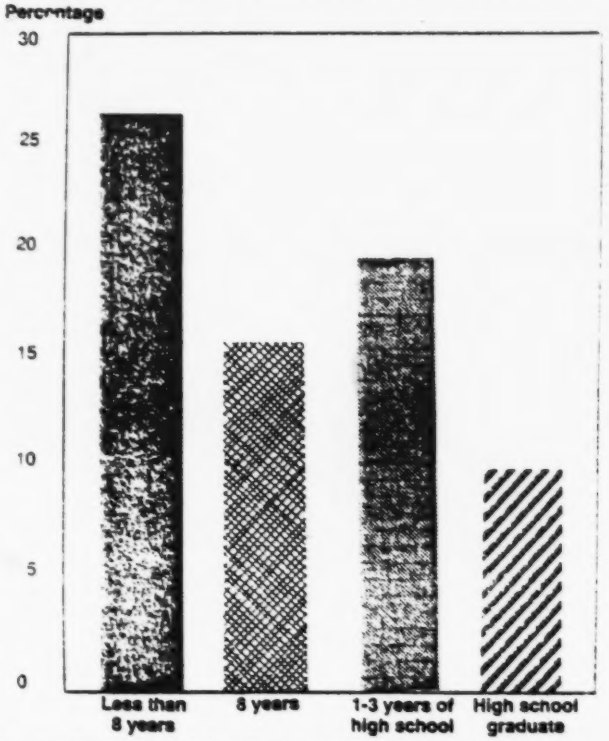
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics.

Comparison of Median Income of Male High School Graduates and Males with Some High School Education (1983)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, Income of Families and Persons in the U.S. 1983

Percentage of Families below Poverty Levels Related to Level of Education of Head of Household



Source: *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Department of Labor.

The Appalachian Regional Commission, in its efforts to improve the economy and quality of life in the Appalachian Region, has identified high school dropouts as a major stumbling block to the area's economic growth. Businesses, both new and established, must have an educated and able workforce to prosper. Without a workforce able to grow with a company and its new technologies, new companies are not likely to come to Appalachia, and even established businesses may be handicapped or lured elsewhere. Addressing this need, ARC has commissioned research and sponsored programs to identify both the causes of the problem and practical, inexpensive ways to address them. Early results have been encouraging, and the lessons learned can have promising implications not only for Appalachia, but for the nation.

ASSESSING THE PROBLEM

As a first step in the development of a dropout reduction plan, in 1984 ARC commissioned the Research Triangle Institute to conduct a study documenting the severity of the dropout problem in various parts of Appalachia and examining existing dropout reduction programs. The study revealed that most school districts define dropouts and/or keep records differently, making comparative data difficult to compile and indicating a need for a more standardized approach to data collection. These obstacles notwithstanding, the following conclusions were drawn:

- High school dropouts are a serious problem in Appalachia, particularly in the central and southern regions.
- Some Appalachian counties have dropout rates as high as 50 percent -- more than double the national average.
- Some state and local school districts have taken steps to address the problem on their own.

- There is a great need for communication and information sharing among various school districts.

With these findings in hand, ARC sponsored a regional workshop on high school dropouts, opening up much-needed lines of communication. The symposium brought together more than 200 educators and community leaders to discuss the extent of the problem, what was being done about it, and what more could be done. The focus was practical, successful ideas for dropout reduction. Panels included:

- o Dimensions of the Dropout Problem
- o Successful Work-Related Dropout Prevention/Remediation Programs
- o Successful School-Related Dropout Prevention/Remediation Programs
- o Appalachian State Initiatives

The workshop underscored the complexity of the dropout problem, and the reality that no single approach would be successful in all school districts or with all potential dropouts. Dropping out, the workshop clarified, is often a symptom of deep-seated problems in the family or community. Young people may be alienated, lack motivation, or have trouble believing that education can make a difference in their lives. They may also be lured by immediate but dead-end jobs, or they may quit in frustration over a history of poor grades and poor performance. Other reasons for quitting include pregnancy, marriage, family problems, and the feeling that no one cares whether they graduate or not. In Appalachia the situation is intensified by years of high unemployment and limited job opportunities.

Each of the successful programs explored in the workshop took these very real family and community issues into account. All were unique, yet they did share certain common themes. Chief among them was local organization and extensive community involvement. It became clear that the problem could not

be effectively handled by schools alone, but that a variety of groups and resources must work together to attack it in each school district.

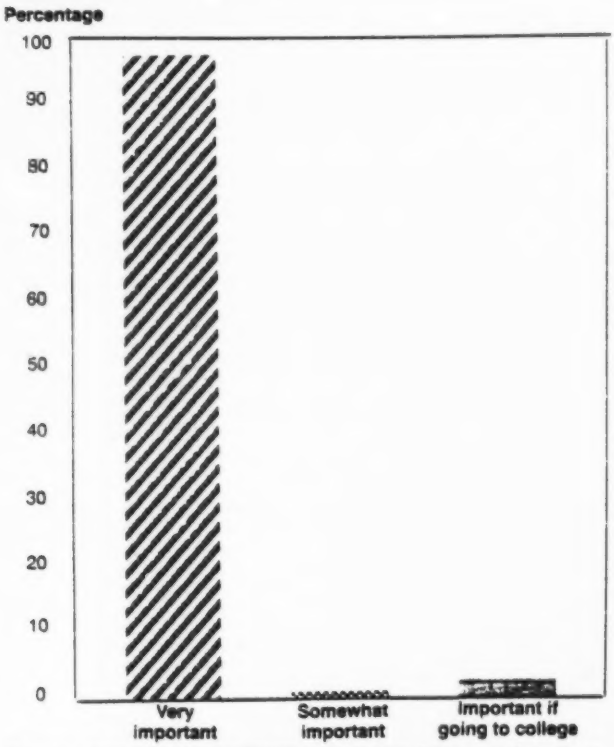
COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING

With the importance of community involvement in successful dropout prevention efforts, the need for public awarenss of the problem and its consequences is clear. Accordingly, ARC sponsored a research project by Campbell Communications, Inc. to assess public awareness of and reaction to dropout information in three representative Appalachian communities. The survey also sought to gauge knowledge of dropout prevention programs as well as the education backgrounds of the respondents and their feelings on the importance of education. Respondents included both community influentials and the general public in communities with dropout rates ranging from approximately 24 percent to 50 percent.

Results of the survey revealed low awareness both of the problem and of any prevention efforts. The majority of respondents believed the dropout rate in their own communities to be less than 10 percent. Up to 70 percent were not aware of any dropout prevention programs in their community or state. Additionally, while nearly all respondents felt a high school diploma was "very important," only 36 percent believed the problem to be "very serious" in their communities. Parents were most often cited as being to blame when their children dropped out of school.

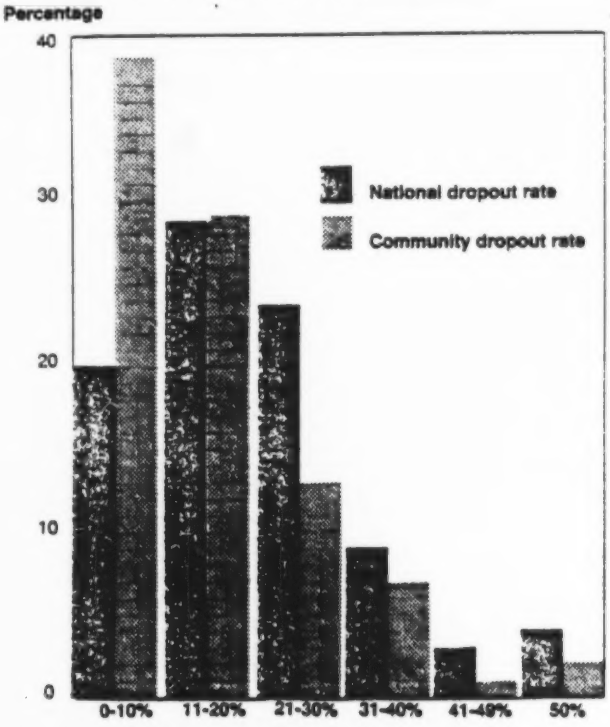
These findings indicate a significant lack of awareness both of the scope of the dropout problem and the role the community can play in reducing that problem. They indicate a need for action.

Survey Results: Importance of a High School Education



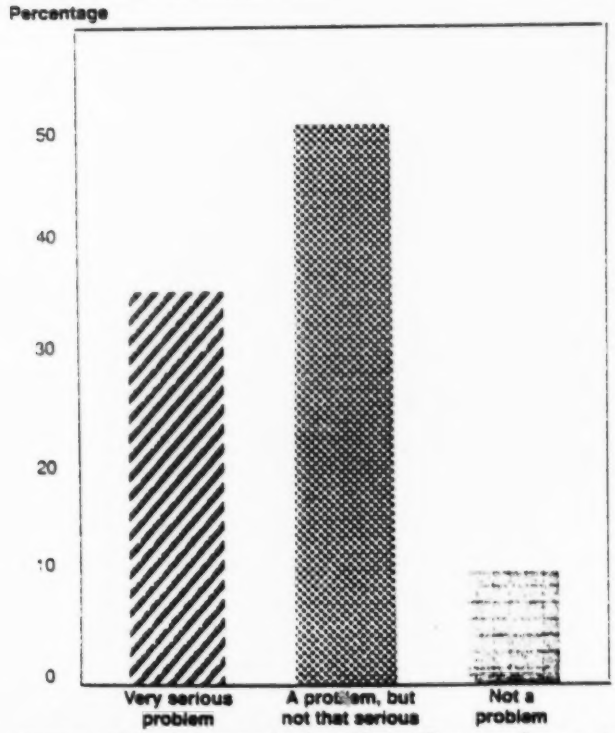
Source: Campbell Communications Market Research Survey of Three Selected Appalachian Communities.

Survey Results: Respondents' Perceptions of National and Community Dropout Rates



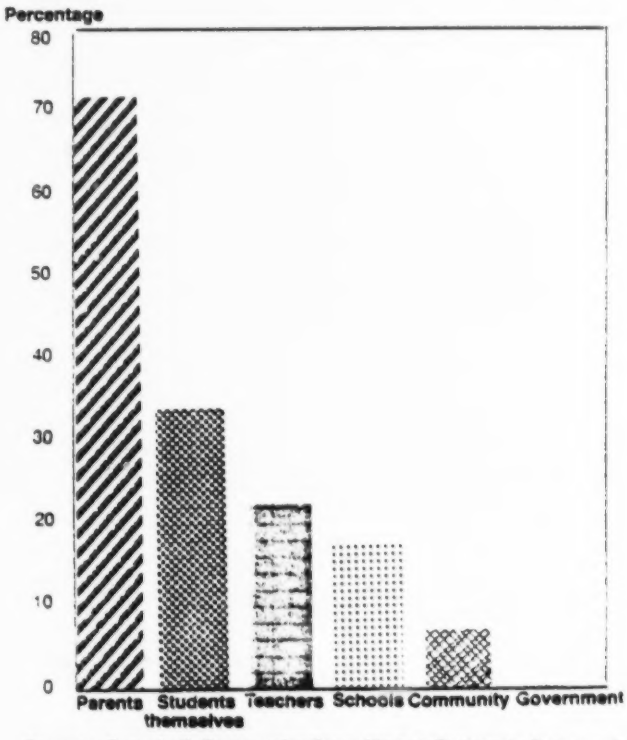
Source: Campbell Communications Market Research Survey of Three Selected Appalachian Communities.

Survey Results: Seriousness of Dropout Problem in Individual Communities



Source: Campbell Communications Market Research Survey of Three Selected Appalachian Communities.

Survey Results: Who is to Blame for the Dropout Problem?



Source: Campbell Communications Market Research Survey of Three Selected Appalachian Communities.

NEW PROGRAMS

With the information gathered from background research and the dropout workshop, ARC developed a ground-breaking regional dropout prevention effort. In its first 18 months the Dropout Prevention Program has allotted $2.5 million to 46 prevention projects. All efforts are locally developed, locally run, and locally sustained. In addition, all employ some combination of special teaching/counseling, work-related training, alternative classes, parental involvement, technical assistance on the state or local level, and/or community awareness. Private sector support must be an integral part of any program requesting funds from ARC.

Additionally, ARC has initiated five technical assistance programs to make dropout prevention expertise available to Appalachian communities, facilitating the rapid development of effective programs. Commission policies also have been modified, allowing governors greater flexibility in using ARC funds for dropout programs; a key element in addressing the complexities of the issue.

An appendix with a brief description of each program is attached to this report.

A PLAN TO INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

A further element of ARC's Dropout Prevention Program is a regional awareness campaign, aimed at informing community members about the impact of the dropout problem and the importance of their involvement. ARC's objectives in its public awareness campaign are:

- To increase public awareness and understanding of the incidence of dropping out and the impact of dropout rates on the economic well-being of local communities, states, and the nation.

- To educate the public about the importance of keeping young people in school until graduation and the many ways pepole can participate in reducing the number of students dropping out in their communities.
- To promulgate the efficacy of public/private partnerships in supporting dropout reduction efforts both locally and regionally.

The campaign comprises a number of messages and materials, some aimed at the general public, others targeted specifically to business. All materials stress the impact of dropping out on human potential and future economic growth, highlighting the complex causes of the problem and the varied possibilities for involvement. Central to the materials is the theme that all potential dropouts, no matter what their reasons for thinking about leaving school, need to know that someone cares about them and believes in them.

The campaign includes print and audiovisual components aimed directly at key public audiences as well as public service and publicity materials.

The awareness campaign does more than point out the problem, however, it discusses solutions. Examples of successful programs; statements from involved teachers, administrators, and policy-makers; and remarks by students who have participated in programs and are still in school are all integral parts of the campaign. Evidence that progress can be and has been made helps provide the optimism and encouragement for active involvement.

Experience in Appalachian communities indicates that when community leaders and concerned citizens are made aware of the problem, solutions begin to take shape. One of the most successful programs in Appalachia, the DALWHICHCOM Foundation, is the result of one businessman's concern and energy. His efforts helped motivate an entire community to work together on several projects, resulting in an 8 percent decrease in high school dropouts, an increase in adult education enrollments, and a marked improvement in high school attendence all in the first year of effort.

ARC, by putting the right information and resources in the right hands, hopes to encourage more such success stories.

CONCLUSION

The high school dropout problem is unquestionably severe, with implications we cannot afford to ignore. It is especially alarming in Appalachia and in many inner cities. But ARC has demonstrated that even where the problem seems bleakest, improvements can be made. By providing individual communities and school districts with information, resources, encouragement, and the freedom to develop programs that fit their needs, public-private sector initiatives can reverse this tide of incomplete education, along with the poverty, hopelessness and helplessness it entails.

APPENDIX

ARC-Funded Dropout Prevention Programs

Alabama

Marion County Board of Education: A school social worker worked with students having difficulty with school work by visiting homes to motivate both student and parents in the need for education. The social worker also acted as liaison between home, school, and other agencies. The project was successful but financial difficulties in Alabama resulted in discontinuation.

Contact: Mr. L.E. Tyra, Marion County Board of Education, Courthouse, Hamilton, Alabama 35570, (205) 921-3192.

Attalla City Board of Education: Seventh and eighth graders identified as potential dropouts receive remedial teaching and vocational training, as well as counseling with parents. An extended day school tutoring program, as well as afternoon and night programs for 16-21 year old dropouts are also available. Civic organizations and industries also take part.

Contact: Wendell Hubbard, Attalla City Schools, 101 Case Avenue, Attalla, Alabama 35954, (205) 538-8051.

Fort Payne City School System: Potential dropouts are identified by age 14 and work with a Dropout Prevention Coordinator, developing a specific individualized plan to keep each child in school. Available resources include counseling, tutoring, motivation, employment counseling, and others. Specific, inexpensive components such as peer counseling, student responsibilities (such as teacher's aide, flag raiser, etc.), and calling home to check up on absences are also part of the program. Businesses are also actively involved.

Contact: Bill Rupil, Fort Payne City Schools, P.O. Box 61, Fort Payne, Alabama 35967, (205) 845-0915.

Georgia

Dalton City/Whitfield County Boards of Education: An active partnership between business and school is at the heart of this program, developed in part by the area's Chamber of Commerce. Businesses have agreed not to hire high school-aged workers full-time before graduation, and to encourage their employees to get their GED's and help keep their children in school. Also, potential dropouts are identified as early as possible, and an individualized intervention plan is developed. Such a plan might include volunteers working with students and parents, and all students are encouraged to become more involved in school through extracurricular activities.

Contact: Nancy Smith, Stay-in-School Task Force, P.O. Box 167, Dalton, Georgia 30722-1676, (404) 277-9707

Murray County Board of Education: Partnership between business and schools is also the central feature of this program. Local industry personnel serve as a "Stay-in-School" Task Force Visitation Team, receiving commitments from 90 percent of local businesses to support the school district's dropout prevention effort.

Contact: Kate Pannell, Murray County Schools, 715 Chestnut Street, Chatsworth, Georgia 30705, (404) 695-4531.

Kentucky

Owsley County Dropout Prevention Program: High school students take part in a number of programs focusing on career preparation, including both vocational and personal skills, and supplemented by counseling, tutoring, and remedial education designed to improve involvement and success in school as well as self-image. An elementary school program gives parents and volunteers the opportunity to tutor young students. Adult education is also available.

Contact: Martha Turner, Owsley County Board of Education, Court Square, Bonneville, Kentucky 41314, (606) 593-6364.

Kentucky Department of Education: ADOPT Program. Businesses, public service organizations, governmental agencies, and teachers work to build a school/community system to motivate youth to complete school. See individual counties.

Laurel County Alternative School: This alternative school serves the needs of students from 8th to 11th grades. Objectives include individualized instruction, a more personalized atmosphere, a lower student-to-teacher ratio, activities geared to student performance, and evaluation by comparison of testing scores as students progress. The school has been highly successful in increasing attendance and grades, while decreasing disciplinary problems.

Contact: Wayne Cornett, 1707 South Main Street, London, Kentucky 40741, (606) 843-6231.

Menifee County Alternative Education Program: Alternative classes with remedial instruction, tutoring, group and individual counseling, and career education are targeted to potential suspended cases in grades 9-12.

Contact: Richard Raliff, P.O. Box 118, Frenchburg, Kentucky 40322, (606) 768-2171.

Johnson County Computer Assisted Instructional Program: Computers are instructing 9th and 10th grade students in remedial math and reading. The effectiveness of this approach in increasing achievement test scores is being tested. It has already proven successful in reducing dropouts.

Contact: Arnold Rollins, Route 276, Box 202, Paintsville, Kentucky 41240, (606) 789-2530.

Martin County Alternative Education Program: High school students spend time in this structured alternative program rather than being suspended from school. The program targets students who have a record of poor attendance, poor academic performance, and discipline problems. Results have been very encouraging in improving all three of these problems.

Contact: Bill Blankenship, Martin County Schools, Inez, Kentucky 41224, (606) 298-3591.

Rowan County Alternative Education Program: Alternative classes serve both potential and actual dropouts, ages 12-21. The program focuses on tutoring, counseling, and career training.

Contact: Billie Clayton, West Sun Street, Moorehead, Kentucky 40351, (606) 784-8911.

The David School: This alternative school works with recently returned dropouts and students ready to graduate. Staff work with older students to prepare them for graduation and to develop a transition plan including information on colleges, vocational schools, job opportunities, etc.

Contact: Dan Green, David, Kentucky 41616, (606) 886-8374.

Pine Mountain Settlement School: A supplemental tutoring and intervention program serves elementary through high schools. The program, which encourages parental and community involvement, incorporates testing, tutoring, and evaluating potential dropouts.

Contact: Paul Hayes, Pine Mountain, Kentucky 40810, (606) 558-3571.

Project ADOPT (Appalachian Dropout Prevention Outreach Program Team): A two person team works to manage a program both to meet student needs and involve the community in dropout prevention efforts. Businesses work with schools, teachers and volunteers work with students, families work with families, and civic groups and local, county, and state governments take part in efforts to keep students in school.

Contact:

Wolfe County

Dr. C. Tony Collins
Superintendent
Wolfe County Board of Education
P.O. Box 67, Court Street
Campton, Kentucky 41301
(606) 668-3155

Clay County

Floretta E. Keith
102 Oak Street
Manchester, Kentucky 41962
(606) 598-2168

Project ADOPT Contacts (continued)

Jackson County

Ernie J. Holt
Box 217
McKee, Kentucky 40477
(606) 287-7181

McCreary County

Gerald Wilson
McCreary County School System
HC 69, Box 24
Stearns, Kentucky 42653
(606) 376-2591

Lee County

Glen Wilson
Lee County Board of Education
Beattyville, Kentucky 41311
(606) 464-8111

Magoffin County

Darwin Allen
Magoffin County Board of Education
Salyersville, Kentucky 41465
(606) 349-6117

Kentucky Educational Television: Television and local outreach combine to create greater awareness and community action. KET produced and aired a one-hour documentary discussing the dropout problem and showcasing successful reduction projects. The program was offered to other PBS stations and is available on videocassette. A technical assistance program as well as promotion and outreach efforts have also been prepared.

Contact: Angie Krusenklaus, 600 Cooper Drive, Lexington, Kentucky 40502, (606) 233-3000.

Clinton County Schools: "Learning Management System" combines ongoing progress reports and an interclass tracking system to follow students' progress. The program helps classroom teachers identify students' problem areas and develop remediation, training, and therapy.

Contact: Rudy Thomas, Clinton County Board of Education, Box 416, Albany, Kentucky 42602, (606) 387-6489.

Knox County Schools: Students in grades 7-12 receive basic skills remediation, personal and career counseling, and pre-employment skills training through tutoring, counseling, and group field trips. The program includes special emphasis on community involvement.

Contact: Joan Spinkles or Roger Keck, Knox County Schools, Box 228, Barbourville, Kentucky 40906, (606) 546-3157.

Lawrence County Schools: This program combines individual and group counseling for students in grades 9-12 with close communication between schools and parents. Daily progress reports are made on students, while home visitations, parent conferences, and telephone contact enable parents to become involved.

Contact: Robert Walker, Lawrence County School System, Building Lane, P.O. Box 607, Louisa, Kentucky 41230, (606) 638-9671.

Letcher County Schools: A tutor works closely with individual students in grades 9-12. The tutor reviews lessons and provides informal counseling during study hall, establishes a homework contract, monitors absences, and works with classroom teachers. Parents are also involved through conferences.

Contact: Bob Matnay, Letcher County Board of Education, Box 788, Park Street, Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858, (606) 633-4455.

Lincoln County Schools: Remedial English, remedial math, consumer skills, and job skills are core subjects for this alternative curriculum featuring tutorial counseling.

Contact: Larry Lewis, Lincoln County Schools, P.O. Box 265, Stanford, Kentucky 40484, (606) 365-2124.

Morgan County Schools: This program focuses on tutoring 9th grade students in identified areas of need. Individual and group counseling as well as activities to improve each student's self-image and home visits are also important.

Contact: Charlotte Allen, Morgan County Schools, Box 489, West Liberty, Kentucky 41472, (606) 743-3205.

Perry County Schools: This program, targeting 9th and 10th grade students, combines counseling, tutoring, visitation, and community awareness.

Contact: Bobby Dean Moore, Perry County Public Schools, 800 High Street, Hazard, Kentucky 41701, (606) 439-5813.

Powell County Schools: Ninth and 10th grade students participate in the alternative program, including consumer education classes, individual counseling, parental involvement, and remediation classes. Career training, guest speakers from local businesses, and field trips to college campuses and area businesses are also part of the program.

Contact: Patricia Billings, Powell County Schools, P.O. Box 5, Stanton, Kentucky 40380, (606) 663-2268.

Adair/Russell County Alternative School: Project COPE emphasizes remedial education, individual programming, tutoring problem areas, group/individual counseling, and career education. This classroom serves students who learn better in an alternative setting as well as students with discipline problems who would otherwise be suspended.

Contact: Jimmy Wilkerson, Russell County Schools, P.O. Box 260, South Main Street, Jamestown, Kentucky 42629, (502) 343-3191.

Wayne County Schools: This program uses a team approach to dropout prevention, involving staff, school, family, and community. Highlights include low student-teacher ratio, group and individual counseling, placement in classes where students can experience success, and peer counseling and tutorial services. Activities are aimed at improving self-image and highlighting the benefits of staying in school.

Contact: Herbert Wheat, Wayne County Schools, P.O. Box 437, Monticello, Kentucky 42633, (606) 348-8484.

Whitley County Schools: This alternative class for potential dropouts in grades 9-12 places emphasis on remedial instruction, individual and group counseling, career education, and tutoring. Home visits and individual plans with specific objectives are also part of the program.

Contact: Elmer Lawson, Whitley County Schools, P.O. Box 358, Williamsburg, Kentucky 40769, (606) 549-3601.

Maryland

RESA of Appalachian Maryland/Washington County: Potential dropouts are identified in 6th grade and work through an individualized intervention program including counseling and tutoring. Training and activities for parents are also an integral part of the program.

Contact: Don Wilson, E. Russell Hicks Middle School, 1321 South Potomac Street, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740, (301) 791-4286.

Mississippi

Houston Municipal School Districts: Basic skill actvities and employment opportunities are provided to potential dropouts, while high school staff participate in workshops. An in-school learning center is also available.

Contact: Raymond Mabry, Houston Separate School District, 632 Starkville Road, Houston, Mississippi 38851, (601) 456-3332.

Baldwyn Public Schools: An alternative high school program serves students ages 16-21 in need of remedial help. The program seeks to direct students to vocational training or local employment opportunities after graduation.

Contact: LaRane Dillinger, Baldwyn High School, Highway 45 North, Baldwyn, Mississippi 38824, (601) 365-2259.

Mississippi Dropout Technical Assistance: A training program is being developed to prevent dropouts in 20 Mississippi counties in Appalachia with very high dropout rates. Programs will help teachers identify and work with potential dropouts beginning in kindergarten through high school.

Contact: Ken Hurt, Division of Appalachian Development, P.O. Box 1606, Tupelo, Mississippi 38801, (601) 844-1184.

North Carolina

Alleghany County Board of Education: Retired educators work one-on-one with students in grades 5-8, where records indicated most potential dropouts began having problems. "Listeners" provide guidance, counseling, and friendship to these students.

Contact: Clarence Crouse, Alleghany County Board of Education, One Peachtree Court, Sparta, North Carolina 28675, (919) 372-4345.

Manpower Development Corporation (MDC, Inc.): Basic skills, instruction, resource libraries, student diagnostic testing, and computer services are components of this hybrid dropout prevention model. The model is based on MDC's Job Readiness Training program and a basic skills program developed by the Upper East Tennessee Educational Cooperative.

Contact: George Autry, MDC, P.O. Box 2226, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514, (919) 968-4531.

Pennsylvania

Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit: The Special Teaching and Training Alternative for Youth project (STAY) is designed to reach all school ditricts within five counties. One component is alternative junior high school programs. Whereas most alternative schools are for high school students, this program seeks to help students experience success early and re-enter the regular program with a more positive attitude.

Contact: Kathy Bohinski, CSIU, P.O. Box 213, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania 17837, (717) 523-1155.

Tennessee

Overton County School District: Improving students' attitudes and self-images is the focus of this project, which works with high-risk students while they participate in the regular curriculum. The program combines the Zig Zigler "I CAN" motivational training with computers. Computers help with motivation and promote basic training.

Contact: William Needham, 112 Russell Street, Livingston, Tennessee 38750, (615) 823-1287.

Oak Ridge City School District: A "Homework Hotline" provides assistance to students in order to help keep them learning effectively and at pace in the regular school program. The hotline provides motivation as well as one-on-one teaching to students in grades 6-12.

Contact: Eleanor Chandler, Oak Ridge Schools, P.O. Box 930, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831, (615) 482-6319.

Hancock County Schools: Parental involvement is encouraged and special counseling is provided for specially identified at-risk students.

Contact: Debra Antrican, Hancock County Board of Education, P.O. Box 187, Sneedville, Tennessee 37869.

Virginia

Southwest Virginia Community College: Because high school dropouts in this area are often only one to three credits short of graduation, but will not return to high school to complete their requirements, SVCC is offering a program providing an opportunity to acquire those credits and receive a diploma. The program targets dropouts under 21, but whose high school graduating class has already graduated. Research is also underway on the causes of dropping out in the region.

Contact: Ms. Pat Wyatt, Southwest Virginia Community College, Richlands, Virginia 24641, (703) 964-2555.

Mountain Empire Community College (Vision Quest): A regional consortium brings together agencies and resources in various counties to work together to prevent dropouts. A remedial program also works with dropouts aged 13-21 to place them in appropriate educational or occupational programs.

Contact: Linda Kilgore, Mt. Empire Community College, Drawer 700, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219, (703) 523-2400.

West Virginia

Taylor County Schools: A District Task Force is being developed to establish mechanisms to identify high risk students at an early age and track them through school. The task force will also develop an interagency referral system, guidance activities for potential dropouts, and an alternative learning program.

Contact: Frank Miller, Taylor County Schools, 306 Beech Street, Grafton, West Virginia 26354, (304) 265-2497.

Mercer County Schools: Use of computers and expanded counseling services in both regular and alternative schools are the focus of dropout prevention efforts here.

Contact: Marguerite Miller, Mercer County Board of Education, 1420 Honaker Avenue, Princeton, West Virginia 24740, (304) 487-1551.

McDowell Board of Education: Parental involvement is the major thrust of this program for grades 5-12. The community has historically made education a low priority, and until recently had the highest dropout rate in the state. Guidance counselors work with students and parents, visit homes, hold

parent meetings, etc., to teach parents the importance of getting involved with their children's educations. The dropout rate has decreased by some 20 percent.

Contact: James Jones, McDowell County School District, 30 Central Avenue, Welch, West Virginia 24801, (304) 436-8441.

West Virginia College of Graduate Studies: Project PAL (Providing Assistance for Learning) involves testing students in 7th through 10th grades to identify potential dropouts, as well as working with potential dropouts in other grades. Tutorial counseling and psychological services are used to help keep students in school.

Contact: Joe Saunders, West Virginia College of Graduate Studies, Institute, West Virginia 25112, (304) 768-9711.